



# GUARDIAN OF PUBLIC HEALTH UPDATE

November 21, 2008

## Preparedness and Planning

### 2009 MDCH-OPHP Volunteer Conference

On February 29, 2009 Michigan will offer its first conference dedicated to support public health and healthcare emergency response efforts for volunteers registered with the MI Volunteer Registry and other volunteer organizations. This Saturday conference is free to attendees, open to all disciplines, and supported by the Department of Health and Human Services's emergency preparedness cooperative agreements.

Conference sessions are designed to educate volunteers about preparedness initiatives in Michigan, the Incident Command structure, rapid triage, and an overview of legal issues. Volunteers will also have an opportunity to network with diverse partner volunteer organizations and gain firsthand experience from fellow volunteers.

For more information, including registration details, please visit the [MI-TRAIN website](#), and search for course ID 1014902. Feel free to contact the Office of Public Health Preparedness at (517) 335-8150 if you have any additional questions.

### Public Health Guide in Emergencies

The book, published by Johns Hopkins, is organized around issues that humanitarian aid workers from international organizations must face in the field. It seeks to provide guidance in practical terms toward the solution of the many technical and management issues that challenge aid workers following natural and man made disasters including complex humanitarian emergencies. The second edition of this popular text sets out key public health principles for managing disasters in developing countries. This is a thorough revision of the first edition published in 2001. For this updated edition, the focus has shifted more toward planning for relief activities in the broader context of long-term development activities in middle- and low-income countries, with less emphasis specifically on refugee circumstances.

### Promising Strategies for Immunizing Health Care Personnel

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, vaccination coverage of health care personnel remains low despite the documented benefits on patient outcomes, staff absenteeism, and reducing infections among staff. In addition, increased vaccination rates can reduce costs within health care organizations. The Joint Commission will gather and review real-world examples of successful initiatives for implementing influenza immunization programs for health care personnel. The free, [educational monograph](#), planned for publication in mid-2009, will include: information about the impact and prevalence of the acquisition and

## News

### Anthrax Prophylaxis?

First-Responders and postal workers may receive anthrax vaccine as a prophylactic measure. See [page 2](#) for more information.

### Parents Likely to Disregard Orders to Evacuate

Data from a recent survey illustrate that in the event of an order to evacuate parents say they are overwhelmingly likely to disregard existing community emergency plans and instead attempt to pick up their children directly from school or day care instead of evacuating separately. See [page 3](#) for details.

### Hunting Regulation Changes

Due to bovine tuberculosis and chronic wasting disease, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources has altered the hunting regulations. Please see [page 6](#) for more information.

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Read the Next *Guardian* Issue!  
December 19, 2008

transmission of influenza in the health care workplace, an overview of barriers to successful influenza immunization programs and strategies for overcoming them, and a compilation of promising practices and effective strategies for implementing health care personnel influenza immunization programs.

### **Voluntary Anthrax Vaccine to First Responders**

The federal Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) has opened the door to voluntary anthrax (*Bacillus anthracis*) vaccination for first responders, revising an 8-year-old recommendation against that step. The committee said the risk of anthrax exposure for emergency responders is low but “may not be zero,” and therefore first-responder agencies may want to offer the vaccine on a voluntary basis, according to information supplied by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

### **BioThrax: Advanced Protection to Postal Workers**

Federal health officials announced a plan to supply mail carriers with antibiotics so they will be protected and prepared to deliver the drugs to others in case of anthrax attack. By providing advance protection to letter carriers who volunteer to deliver antibiotics in an affected community, the Postal Service hopes to get much needed medicine to those who need it quickly. The program will start with a \$500,000 pilot involving carriers in Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota.



### **Michigan Foot and Mouth Disease Exercise**

Michigan held a major emergency exercise in August using a Foot and Mouth Disease scenario. Over 135 people representing multiple federal, state, and local agencies, along with the Michigan Veterinary Corps and the private sector took part in the exercise at multiple locations. In addition, observers were allowed to tour the exercise. This was a very large activity and learning opportunity for the state, demonstrating multiple capabilities and also identifying areas for improvement that are already beginning to be addressed.

### **Guideline for Disinfection and Sterilization in Healthcare Facilities**

The “Guideline for Disinfection and Sterilization in Healthcare Facilities, 2008” presents evidence-based recommendations on the preferred methods for cleaning, disinfection and sterilization of patient-care medical devices and for cleaning and disinfecting the healthcare environment.

### **Hazardous Chemical Incidents in Schools**

The federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) conducts national public health surveillance of chemical incidents through its Hazardous Substances Emergency Events Surveillance (HSEES) system. To identify school-related incidents and elucidate their causes and consequences to highlight the need for intervention, ATSDR conducted an analysis of HSEES data for 2002-2007. During that period, 423 chemical incidents in elementary and secondary schools were reported by 15 participating states. Proper chemical use and management is essential to protect school building occupants. Additional education directed at raising awareness of the problem and providing resources to reduce the risk is needed to ensure that schools are safe from unnecessary dangers posed by hazardous chemicals.

### **Pilot Exercise on Nuclear Threat to Interstate Highways**

On November 6, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced the completion of “Southern Exposure”, a full-scale exercise. This exercise was intended to demonstrate the Southeast region’s capabilities to coordinate, communicate and respond during and after a possible radiological/nuclear threat to the region’s interstate highways.

### **New Medical Surge Model**

The Rocky Mountain Regional Care Model for Bioterrorist Events model was developed by a multiagency working group, including representatives from the staffs of major academic medical centers, government, military, public health, emergency management institutions. The primary purpose of this effort was to address medical surge capacity needs in federal Region III. The overarching purpose of this project was to develop an exportable surge capacity model that included exportable tools for regional bioterrorism planners and decision makers at the national, state, local and provider level.

### **Radiation Mitigator Drug**

On October 29 the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority awarded researchers \$2.7 million to develop a radiation mitigator drug that could counter the effects of radiation exposure in case of large-scale public exposure. The ultimate goal of the contract is to develop an easily administered drug that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention can store and fly to hospitals and care facilities if and when an emergency occurs. Using both mouse model and human cell and tissue research, they have shown that the drug, when delivered 24 hours after irradiation, enhances cell recovery.

### **Responding to a Package with Biological Threat Suspicion**

The International Association of Fire Chiefs, in cooperation with FBI Hazardous Materials Response Unit FBI Laboratory, developed these guidelines to provide a model procedure for first-arriving emergency service personnel for addressing potential bioterror events primarily involving suspicious letters, packages or containers. This model provides a framework for building a local protocol tailored to a specific community. It was created to serve as a model for all types of fire departments in all types of communities. While some information may reach beyond the typical scope of the first responder, it is outlined so that a first responder will have knowledge of the broader process in which they may be requested or required to assist.

### **Why Parents May Not Heed Evacuation Orders**

Since 2002, the National Center for Disaster Preparedness (NCDP) at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health, and The Children's Health Fund (CHF), have conducted annual surveys of public attitudes and personal preparedness in the aftermath of the terror attacks of September 11, 2001. Data from this year's survey illustrate that in the event of an order to evacuate parents say they are overwhelmingly likely to disregard existing community emergency plans and instead attempt to pick up their children directly from school or day care instead of evacuating separately. Despite years of federal and local government efforts to enhance personal preparedness, the majority of U.S. adults still do not have the most basic preparations in place for a potential evacuation. These findings strongly suggest that far more work needs to be done to prepare for an unexpected emergency situation.

### **Policy Guide on Prior Notice of Imported Food Shipments**

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) announced a final rule and draft compliance policy guide (CPG) for "Prior Notice of Imported Food Shipments." The final rule is part of the requirements of the Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act of 2002. This rule is part of FDA's efforts to protect the nation's food supply against terrorism and other food-related emergencies. The draft CPG describes FDA and CBP's strategy for enforcing the requirements of the prior notice final rule while maintaining an uninterrupted flow of food imports.

## Surveillance

### Healthcare Facility *Clostridium difficile* Survey

This Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC) survey presents a one-day snapshot in time of the prevalence of *Clostridium difficile* infection (CDI) in American hospitals. APIC's 12,000 members collected data about all of their CDI patients on one day between May and August 2008. [Survey results](#) were collected from 12.5% of all medical facilities in the U.S. that care for virtually every type of patient, including those at acute care, cancer, cardiac, children's, long-term care and rehabilitation hospitals. A total of 1,443 patients were identified with CDI from among the 648 participating hospitals.

### H5N1 Advice for Travelers

Highly pathogenic avian influenza A virus (also called "H5N1," "bird flu," or "avian flu") has caused serious disease in poultry and wild birds on multiple continents. Humans rarely get sick with H5N1 viruses, but since 2003, close to 400 people in parts of Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East have become ill and about 63% of these people have died. You can find the most up-to-date information by using the links on [this website](#).

### Google Launches Influenza Surveillance Tool

Google's philanthropic arm, Google.org, has launched a new tool designed to identify and track influenza outbreaks. [Google Flu Trends](#) will monitor the number of queries for influenza and influenza-like symptoms entered into its popular search engine to determine the geographical location and nature of seasonal flu activity. The system will provide near real-time updates of flu activity to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The agency, in turn, will use the information to issue alerts to hospitals, clinics and physician offices in affected regions, enabling providers to stock up on influenza tests; antiviral drugs; and antibiotics for people who develop bacterial co-infections, which can worsen the severity of the flu. Currently, the CDC relies on reports

from health centers that submit data on the volume of patients reporting flu-like symptoms and lab tests that confirm the presence of influenza, but that data typically involves a two-week lag time. Google will not charge the CDC for the reports and will keep the individual search data confidential to preserve patient anonymity.



## Communications

### MDCH Webcasts Available

The director of the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) announced that the department has [added webcasts](#) to its website in an effort to further communicate its health message to Michigan residents. Available webcasts include (but are not limited to) information on: holiday safety, carbon monoxide poisoning, West Nile Virus, and flu shots.

## Answers about Emergency Preparedness

*The New York Times* has created [a blog](#) to answer readers' questions regarding emergency preparedness. This week's questions are answered by Dr. Irwin Redlener, an authority on disaster preparedness at Columbia University. Readers submitted a range of questions this week, including (but not limited to): how to organize a neighborhood disaster response program, individual preparedness strategies, parents' preparedness, and what the essential items to keep in a disaster kit.

## Communicating with the Public about Emerging Health Threats

Researchers sought to better understand the challenges of communicating with the public about emerging health threats, particularly threats involving toxic chemicals, biological agents, and radioactive materials. Over 2 years, investigative teams conducted 79 focus group interviews with 884 participants and individual cognitive response interviews with 129 respondents, for a total sample of 1013 individuals. [Researchers found](#) limited public understanding of emerging biological, chemical, and radioactive materials threats and of the differences between them; demand for concrete, accurate, and consistent information about actions needed for protection of self and family; active information seeking from media, local authorities, and selected national sources; and areas in which current emergency messaging can be improved. In conclusion, this study found the public will respond to a threat situation by seeking protective information and taking self-protective action, underlining the critical role of effective communication in public health emergencies.

## Pandemic Planning

### Respirator-Fit Testing: Does it Work?

*Infection Control and Hospital Epidemiology* published an article regarding the fit testing of respirators. The researchers tested whether the efficacy of fit testing for N-95 respirators was long term. [They found](#) that 50% of the healthcare workers had adequate respirator fit. However, they were not able to guarantee that these results would hold up long term or in those who wear the respirators infrequently.



### Using Pandemic Vaccines Today as a Primer

The World Health Organization (WHO) has encouraged countries to prepare in advance by developing influenza pandemic preparedness plans that involve public-health and pharmaceutical interventions. Vaccination is a cornerstone of these plans. However, a pandemic vaccine cannot be manufactured in advance because the next pandemic virus cannot be predicted. The concepts of vaccine stockpiling and pre-pandemic vaccination have thus become attractive. Human H5N1 vaccines are currently available and can induce heterotypic immunity. WHO and governments should give urgent consideration to the use of these [vaccines for the priming](#) of individuals or communities who would be at greatest risk of infection if an H5N1 influenza pandemic were to emerge.

### Pandemic Planning Webcast

The archive of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services's Secretary's Pandemic Planning and Preparedness [webcast from October 29](#) is now available online. The Secretary opened the program with an overview of the notable achievements in our nation's efforts to prepare for a pandemic. He



then identified four of his major remaining concerns that he would like to communicate to the new administration for their immediate consideration. First, finish the development of vaccine manufacturing facilities in the United States and promote cell based technologies to produce new type of flu vaccine. Second, defend the world flu sample sharing network. Third, concentrate on countermeasure distribution. Finally, remind states, businesses, and families about their need to prepare.

## Other News

### 2008-09 Michigan Deer Hunting Season

The 2007-2008 winter had a negative impact on the deer herd in much of Michigan's upper peninsula. However, the increase in mast yield (fruits and nuts) may have offset losses. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) expects increased numbers of deer in the northern lower peninsula, but bovine tuberculosis remains a concern in the northeastern part of the state. Deer prefer a habitat where approximately 25% of the field corn remains unharvested, and this could be a factor in the southern lower peninsula hunting this season. There are changes to [deer hunting regulations](#) that will impact deer hunters this year. Chronic wasting disease (CWD), a fatal neurological disease of deer and elk, was confirmed in a privately-owned cervid (deer) facility in Kent County. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources instituted a baiting ban to help to prevent the potential spread of CWD. A new regulation for Michigan's upper peninsula also allows hunters to decide, before purchasing their deer license, if they wish the opportunity to take one or two legally antlered deer.



### Mercury-Bearing Devices Prohibited Soon

On January 1, 2009, state [law will prohibit](#) the use of blood-pressure recording, measuring, or monitoring devices containing mercury, outside of private home settings. The mercury bearing devices most familiar in healthcare settings are sphygmomanometers, blood pressure cuffs, and thermometers. For more information on the Michigan law, mercury's adverse health effects or how to properly dispose of these devices go to the MDCH mercury web-site.

### OPHP Welcomes New Staff Member

OPHP is excited to announce that Thomas J ("TJ") Richardson has accepted the position of Great Lakes Healthcare Preparedness Program Project Manager. This innovative position was developed and is funded through a collaborative partnership among the ASPR Healthcare Preparedness Program (HPP) Coordinators from the FEMA V areas (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin, and the City of Chicago). This group meets every six months to work on implementing the deliverables of the ASPR HPP and identify mechanisms to better address the critical medical surge issues both

intra and interstate. Many great inter-state projects have been identified, but needed an individual dedicated to the coordination and implementation amongst the FEMA V grantees.

TJ Richardson brings a strong preparedness and response background to the GLHP-Project Manager position. He is certified as an Incident Command Instructor, Hazardous Materials Instructor, and maintains a Michigan licensure as a Paramedic. TJ has spent many years planning for and responding to natural and man-made disasters in the Mid-Michigan area. TJ has completed a Bachelor's of Applied Science degree in Public Safety Studies and a Master's of Science degree in Executive Fire Service Leadership.

TJ has started orientation to the health preparedness projects and is planning to visit each of the FEMA V area during this first year to learn the details of their respective HPP programs. He can be contacted at RichardsonT4@michigan.gov.

### Wildfires in Southern California

In response to the current wildfires in Southern California, we would like to remind you of the following resources:

- [CDC Wildfires Homepage](#)
- [Information for Responders](#)
- [Current Status of Incidents in California](#)

### How Does Bleach Kill Bacteria?

Researchers published in the journal *Cell*, determined exactly how bleach kills bacteria. They found that the hypochlorite molecule reacts and causes aggregation of the essential bacterial proteins.



## Training and Education

Date/Time	Event	Location
Dec. 4, 2008	<b>Developing Volunteer Resources</b> This <a href="#">one-day course</a> is designed to cover a broad range of issues in disaster volunteerism expanding on the concepts presented in the prerequisite FEMA Independent Study course, Managing and Developing Volunteers. Topics will include spontaneous volunteerism in disasters, liability issues, marketing, recruitment, and recognition of volunteers. There is no fee for this course. Visit the Michigan State Police website for further details and registration information.	Lansing, MI
Dec. 4, 2008 1-2:30pm	<b>Mass Antibiotic Dispensing</b> The Strategic National Stockpile will present a satellite broadcast and webcast entitled " <a href="#">Mass Antibiotic Dispensing</a> : Partnering with Tribal Governments and Communities".	Satellite Broadcast or Webcast

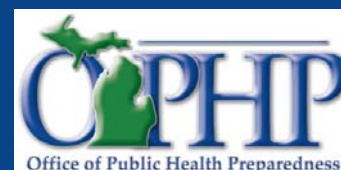
Date/Time	Event	Location
Dec. 5, 2008	<b>Public Health Grand Rounds: Youth Violence</b> Presenters open the session by framing the topic from research and practice perspectives. These talks are followed by a facilitated discussion with presenters and audience. This free presentation will be available on-site at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor or via live webcast. Registration is required for either medium/format. Please visit the <a href="#">School of Public Health website</a> for further information.	Ann Arbor, MI or Webcast
Feb. 3, 2009	<b>Emergency Preparedness for Persons with Disabilities and Special Needs</b> This workshop will examine existing and/or needed standards for emergency preparedness for persons with disabilities and special needs. This event will work to identify what standards currently exist and in what areas new standards need to be developed, followed by actionable recommendations for the timely development of standards in the identified needs areas. Please contact Matt Deane by email at <a href="mailto:mdeane@ansi.org">mdeane@ansi.org</a> for more information.	Kellogg Conference Hotel - Washington, DC



Photo by Debbie Crowe



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This publication is supported by Cooperative Agreement Number U90/CCU517018-08 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of CDC.